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Cloning: the New Age

Lee M. Silver is a professor at Princeton University. He introduces us to a world of cloning in his article “Jennifer and Rachel.” This article is excerpted from Silver’s book Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World. In this article Silver argues that the effects of cloning are not harmful and should be welcomed legally in the United States.

Jennifer is a thirty-five year old, single woman, who has graduated from college and has moved steadily upward in the business world. One day she awakes early in the morning realizing, as like many women her age do, that her body is aging rapidly and she needs to conceive a child while she still can. Unlike other women, Jennifer does not want to share that new development with anyone else, she wants to produce this child with no sperm donor, and create a new life with her own cells.

Jennifer realizes that the federal law prohibits cloning in the United States, unless in cases of untreatable infertility. She decides to take a vacation to the Cayman Islands, where other women in her situation have done. When she gets there she goes to a large reprogenetic clinic that specializes in cloning. There the physicians and biologists do not question one’s motives or decision making. They simply do what you want them to do.

Jennifer is a healthy fertile woman with no need for other biological participants in the cloning process. So, she proceeded with the usual precautions of the clinic. One week later a positive pregnancy test would prove that the implant was successful. Two weeks later she takes another test to make sure the pregnancy has taken effect. Afterwards she schedules an appointment with Dr. Steven Glassman, her gynecologist and obstetrician. The doctor knew that Jennifer was a single woman, but he did not bother asking her about being pregnant.

Throughout the course of Jennifer’s pregnancy she visited the doctor regularly. With regular procedures and ultrasounds she was informed that she is carrying a single normal fetus, an amniocentesis confirms there is not any known genetic problem.

March 15, 2050, Jennifer delivers a baby girl, whom she named Rachel. After being taken to the maternity ward, a nurse comes in to fill out forms for the birth certificate, and of course she listed Jennifer as the mother without question. She then asked about the father and Jennifer replied “Unknown.” Jennifer knew that there would be times when people will comment on how similar her child resembles her. She prepared herself by knowing how she would reply, “Yes. She does have my facial features.”

The author poses a question; who really are Rachel’s parents? Silver explains that Jennifer is Rachel’s birth mother, since she was born out of her body. Yet, genetic terms say that Jennifer and Rachel are twin sisters rather than mother and daughter. Rachel’s grandparents are actually her genetic parents as well. And when Rachael has children, her children will also be her mother’s children.

Daniel Callahan, a critic of cloning, argues that engineering someone’s entire genetic makeup would have a great compromise to that person’s right to a unique identity. He feels that it is unfair for Rachel to go through her childhood knowing what she will look like as an adult. Silver rebuttals clones are not the only ones that know genetic features that they will inherit from their parents. Silver also argues that just because Rachel has the same genes as Jennifer does not mean that her life will turn out the same way. He feels if people are raised differently they will turn out the same way.

Silver believes that politicians care so much about cloning, but so little about children living in poverty. Jennifer is a stable mother, with means of taking care of her child. Critics also feel that human embryos should be treated like human beings and not to be treated like human beings and not to be tampered with. While Silver believes that cloning protocol does not tamper with embryos, it only tampers with unfertilized eggs and adult cells like those we scratch off our arms without a second thought.

There are also critics that argue that cloning leaves God out of the creation process. Silver’s response is that each new reprogenetic technology is incorporated into our culture. The world is changing rapidly and there is a lot of new technology that will come about.

Work Cited

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